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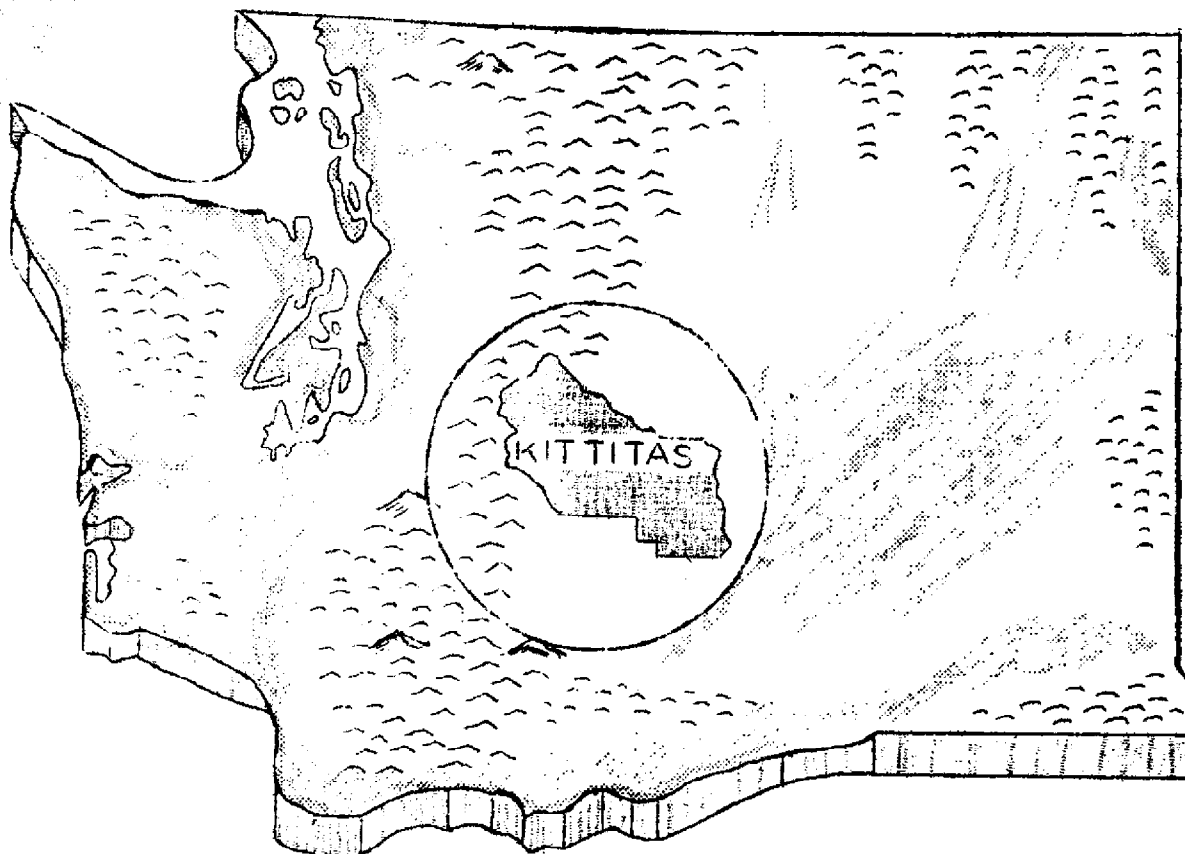
KITTITAS COUNTY

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COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DATA SERIES
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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
J. D. Dwyer, Director

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Agricultural Marketing Service
S. R. Newell

WASHINGTON CROP AND LIVESTOCK REPORTING SERVICE
348 Federal Office Building
Seattle 4, Washington

FOREWORD

This book on Kittitas County is one of an original series being devoted to the history and present nature of agriculture in each of the thirty-nine counties of the State of Washington. This project was initiated in 1956 through funds made available by Sverre N. Omdahl, Director, Washington State Department of Agriculture, 1948-56. State funds were matched by moneys from the United States Department of Agriculture under the Research and Marketing Act of 1946.

County agricultural data books are intended to serve a variety of needs. Continually changing conditions in a dynamic state such as Washington require constant planning by groups and individuals both in private enterprise and public service. Comprehensive knowledge of land resources, population and agricultural-economic trends in a local area such as Kittitas County is of great value. This book will be useful for reference in public and private instruction by vocational agriculture and social studies teachers in Kittitas County schools. It has been devised also to inform adults interested in knowing more about their immediate area, as well as persons and enterprises concerned with agricultural production and marketing or prospective settlement and investment in the county.

Carefully selected geographic facts, agricultural history, population trends and statistical data are included to give an over-all appreciation of Kittitas County. The enumerations of the United States Censuses of Population and Agriculture since 1890 and recent estimates of the Washington State Census Board are summarized to give a perspective of development since the establishment of Kittitas County in 1883. Facts on topography, soil, climate and forests which influence farming are integrated from surveys and reports of government agencies. Estimates of leading crops by years since 1939 by the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service provide a measure of the trend in the agriculture of the county farm industry.

Acknowledgment is accorded the professional work of several persons. Immediate direction was under Emery C. Wilcox, Agricultural Statistician in Charge, Estimates Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Supervision, research and cartographic illustration was performed by Dr. Woodrow R. Clevinger, Market Analyst, Washington State Department of Agriculture. Mr. Richard Perry, of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and Leonard W. Orvold, D. W. Barrowman and Christian A. Stokstad, Agricultural Statisticians, Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture, gave valuable assistance. Vladimir Kovalik, University of Washington graduate student in geography, compiled most of the statistical tables and graphs. The clerical staff of the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service prepared tabular material for the book.

J. D. Dwyer, Director
Washington State Department of Agriculture

Olympia, Washington
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PART I

History of Kittitas County Agriculture

Introduction

Kittitas County, a land of forested Cascade Mountains and upper Yakima River Valley plains, is located in east central Washington. One of the more recent sections of Washington to be settled, it has grown in population and in importance of farm products. It ranks as the second Washington county in non-dairy cattle and also is important as an irrigated farming area specializing in forage crops and commercial vegetables.

With an area of 2,341 square miles or approximately 1,481,600 acres Kittitas is one of the larger counties of the state, ranking seventh in size among the 39 Washington counties. In terms of land space, it is larger than Delaware and nearly twice the size of Rhode Island. It ranks twentieth in population among Washington's counties with 21,700 inhabitants. Ellensburg, the county seat, has 8,750 inhabitants and is the twenty-fourth ranking city of the state.

With over two-thirds of the surface hilly and mountainous, the population density is relatively small, being only nine persons per square mile. Population has grown gradually in the irrigated farming areas but has decreased in the coal mining district. The entire population has slightly more than doubled since 1900, when it was 9,704 persons. According to the Census of 1950 about two-fifths of the population was urban (living in cities of 2,500 and over). Another two-fifths was rural-nonfarm (living in country but not operating farms). Only one-fifth of the population was classified rural farm (living on farms).

The early economic history of the county was characterized by dependence on range livestock raising and mining. This was followed by expansion of general and diversified agriculture when the Kittitas Division of the Yakima Irrigation Project was completed. In 1950 agriculture was the leading field of employment and income, accounting for 25 percent followed by the service trades at 14 percent. In 1954 the value of all Kittitas County farm products

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sold amounted to \$9,717,000. In value of all farm products sold in 1954, Kittitas ranked fifteenth in the state.

Kittitas County agriculture has changed, progressed and expanded. In a little over 75 years, settlers of varied origins and nationalities have developed 1,131 farms from a vast wilderness of pine forests, dryland ranges and valley plains. In 1954 all the farm land and farm buildings within Kittitas County were estimated to average \$34,058 per farm, or a county total of \$38,520,000.

History 1/

Before settlement by white men, the present Kittitas County area was occupied by roving bands of Yakima and Wenatchi (Wenatchee) Indians and also by hunting and food gathering parties of Cayuse and Nez Perce. The Kittitas Valley lowlands formed by the upper Yakima River were natural trail routes over the Cascades at Snoqualmie Pass and northward to Canada over Coluckum Pass and the Okanogan River. Bands of migratory Indians using horses gathered in the plains around present-day Ellensburg to graze horses, dig "camas" or bread root, fish in the Yakima River and hunt in the Cascade Mountains. Indian camps were located at the mouths of Manastash Creek, Tansum Creek and Nanum Creek. The name of the county was derived from an Indian word "Kittitas" meaning "plenty food".

The Indians had peaceful contact with British and American fur traders and later with Jesuit Catholic missionaries. Later they became hostile toward American settlers. Their hostility started with the Cayuse Indian War and the Whitman massacre near Walla Walla in 1847. Prior to this, they had contact in 1812-1814 with Alexander Ross of the Astor Company, an American fur trading enterprise. Ross had come to the Kittitas Valley area to buy horses from the mixed tribes.

Indian hostility led by the Yakimas prevented white settlement in the present Kittitas area for some time. War parties crossed the Cascades in 1855-56 and attacked the village of Seattle and raided other settlements in the Puget Sound country. In the summer of 1856, a small patrol of U.S. Army troops led by Major Granville O. Haller moved from Fort Naches into the Kittitas Valley to pacify the Indians. Haller abandoned his camp in the Kittitas Valley in the fall of 1856. After a successful Indian campaign in

1/ This historical summary has been derived from four sources:

- (1) William D. Lyman. History of the Yakima Valley, Washington. Chicago: S.J. Clark Company, 1919.
- (2) Richard M. Perry. The Counties of Washington (mimeographed) published by Belle Reeves, Secretary of State, Olympia, Washington, 1943. See section on Kittitas County.
- (3) Washington State Associations of County Commissioners and County Engineers, 1953 Yearbook, The Book of the Counties, see pages 106-108, Kittitas.
- (4) Edward C. Whitley. Agricultural Geography of the Kittitas Valley. Master of Arts Thesis, Geography, University of Washington, 1949.

other parts of eastern Washington by the Army, peace was established in 1858. The Yakima, Wenatchi, Cayuse, Palus and other Indian tribes recognized the Treaty of 1855 made at Walla Walla. Chief Kamiakum of the Yakimas and chiefs of other tribes moved their people to the Yakima and Colville Reservations, and undisputed settlement in the Kittitas area by American pioneers was underway.

The first settlers were transient stockmen who drove cattle from the south up the Yakima Valley beginning in the spring of 1861. Kittitas Valley was on the drive route from the Yakima Valley to the Cariboo mines on the Fraser River of Canada and over Snoqualmie Pass to Puget Sound markets. Cattle were grazed enroute on the tall bunchgrass which carpeted the valley and at times herds were wintered in the lowlands. Andrew Jackson Splawn was one of the earliest range cattlemen. He established a trading post at Ellensburg in 1867. Another stockmen, John A. Shoudy, helped found Ellensburg, naming the site after his wife, Ellen Shoudy. Other early settlers were Frederick Ludi on Manastash Creek in 1867 and Tillman Houser near Ellensburg in 1868.

These and other early settlers acquired land through squatter's rights and the Homestead Act of 1862. Permanent settlement with homes, barns and fenced fields was slow in getting established. The climate was dry and the most common livelihood was to range cattle over large areas.

Irrigation was started through cooperatives established by early settlers in 1871. By 1879 they had constructed about 17 miles of canals and about 6,000 acres were being irrigated by water from Manastash and Taneum Creeks. In 1881 a group of farmers united in the establishment of the Ellensburg Water Company. This group constructed 20 miles of canal and diverted water from the Yakima River to irrigate 7,000 acres. About 65 additional miles of canal--the West Side, Olson ditch and Cascade Canals--were developed by this company and by 1902 this development served about 30,000 acres with irrigation water.

By 1883 there were several thousand persons living in the Kittitas and Ellensburg areas. They petitioned for a separate county government. As part of Yakima County, they considered the mileage to the county seat at Yakima too distant. Kittitas County was separated from Yakima and created as a government with a seat at Ellensburg, November 24, 1883. An unusual office in the new county government was that of Sheep Commissioner, necessitated by need to regulate a large and rapidly growing sheep raising industry. E.W. Iyen was the first Commissioner. The first Census in 1890 enumerated a population of 8,777.

The arrival of the Northern Pacific Railway, the development of the Roslyn-Cle Elum coal fields and a general expansion of livestock raising and irrigated agriculture between 1900 and 1910 brought the greatest period of growth. Population doubled from 9,704 in 1900 to 18,561 in 1910. The transcontinental line of Northern Pacific was constructed through the valley in 1886, providing new market outlets to Puget Sound and the East. Communications were further improved when the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific railroad built its line through Kittitas Valley in 1909.

One of the largest coal fields in the state was developed by Northern Pacific Railway and its subsidiary, The Northwestern Improvement Company at Roslyn and Cle Elum. Mining started in 1886 and hundreds of workers settled

in the district. During this period over 2,000 European immigrants settled in Kittitas County to work in the mines or to take up farms and other trades. In the Census of 1920, Italians, Austrians, English and Yugoslavs were prominent in the mining region.

From 1910 to 1940, population remained fairly stable increasing slowly to 20,230. Coal mining activity decreased but new irrigation developments expanded agriculture. Improved highway communications and a wider variety of employment fields helped to maintain a stable economy. In 1915 an improved highway (now U.S. 10) was completed through Snoqualmie Pass, connecting Kittitas County with the Seattle-Tacoma market area for potatoes, hay and cattle. A major influence was the construction of the Kittitas Division of the Yakima Irrigation Project. It was started in 1926 and was completed in 1930, bringing about 70,000 acres of land under irrigation. Two food processing companies located canning and freezing plants in Ellensburg, opening new markets for specialty crops of sweet corn and green peas.

The livestock industry of the state became well represented in Ellensburg. A stockyard was established. The Washington Cattlemen's Association located there and numerous cattle and sheep companies and buyers based their operations in this city. With a long tradition of stock raising in the area, the Ellensburg Rodeo was developed as one of the major rodeos and tourist attractions of the West.

Another important part of the county's economy is the Central Washington College of Education which was established in 1902 at Ellensburg as a teachers college. Enrollments and faculty have grown, making the institution an important basis of local employment.

Other agencies and groups have influenced Kittitas agriculture. The Bureau of Reclamation (Kittitas Reclamation District) played a major role in planning and informing growers in new phases of irrigation agriculture. The Soil Conservation Service in cooperation with the County Agricultural Extension agents have influenced an improvement in cropping and grazing practices. Valuable assistance and information has been provided through the research of the State Agricultural Experiment Station at Pullman, the Irrigation Experiment Station at Prosser, the Tree Fruit Experiment Station at Wenatchee and the Extension Service, County Agent office at Ellensburg. The U.S. Forest Service, through its grazing land management in Snoqualmie and Wenatchee National Forests, has been closely allied to the sheep raising industry through its grazing permit policies. Progress in improving quality and methods of marketing the county's farm and range production has resulted from the work of the State Fruit Commission, Washington Cattlemen's Association, Kittitas Dairymen's Association and the Washington Wool Growers Association.